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The Abiding Warrant for Christian Worship

BY JAY T. STOCKING

Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.—Matthew 16:18.

THE historicity of this saying of Jesus is a matter which we shall not here consider. If Jesus did not think of himself as laying the foundation of a new organization to be known as a church, he nevertheless was doing so. If Jesus did not use these exact words, somebody did, and that somebody saw reason in what he said.

Some people are always wondering why more people do not go to church. For myself I never cease to find cause for profound wonder in the fact that so many people do go to church. If we knew why they do we should penetrate to the mystery of human personality.

In the yearnings of men, which moved our fathers yesterday, move us today, and will move our children tomorrow, we find the enduring warrant for our Christian worship. On the unchanging need of men which Peter shared, on Peter's confidence in Jesus, which we share, the Christian church is solidly and securely built.

I should like to reflect with you on three great yearnings of men on which Christian worship is founded.

I

The first is a yearning for authority. Man was born to serve and he knows it. The universe demands obedience. A man must have a master and he knows no rest unless and until he has one. Man's age-long battle for liberty has been waged that he may be free to elect his own master. The Pilgrim fathers had no desire to be free from authority but to be free to choose whom they would serve and obey. They crossed the ocean that they might enter into free and happy

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servitude. A man is never happy for long in being served. This is nature's protest that he is not the end. When all things come to him he soon becomes surfeited and smothered. He finds joy in things only when he can bestow them upon the objects of his devotion. When the gods bow down before him he despises them and rejects them. He will worship no God except a God whom he must serve with all his heart and soul and mind.

There is a peace to which man is heir that he can experience only as he loses himself in devotion to some great cause or end. Righteousness is happy obedience. Love of truth is love of an inexorable and uncompromising master.

No man is free to go anywhere unless he is bound somewhere. He is, otherwise, a ship on the sea without a port to make, sport only for wind, wave and tide. It can be said as truly of him as of a hobo that he has found his freedom but "lost his sense of direction." The man without authority is a man without a country. Completely free, he is completely bewildered.

The Scorn of Authority

Freedom of this sort is one of the grave perils of our day. Man misses the idols that he smashes and mourns the gods whom he destroys. Much of the restlessness of our day, the dissatisfaction with life, the sense of futility, the widespread cynicism—what are they but the revenge of a scorned authority? Protestants know well the agony of liberty, the burden of finding the truth. But the agony of free men is a small thing beside the agony of one who knows no master and recognizes no authority.

There can be no substitution of activity for worship and obedience. There is no salvation for men in the modern cult of "service" of which men warble so glibly. There is little kinship between the service that the gas station gives in hope of larger patronage and that service of God whose reward is peace. Spelling it with a capital letter does not make it sacred. As Mr. Chesterton has remarked, "a word like Service has stolen the sacred capital letter from the things it was supposed to serve." He calls it "an idolatry of the intermediate to the oblivion of the ultimate."

There is no peace for men except in the service of the ultimate. Nothing but the sight of some cause served can avert the verdict at the end of life's busy and toilsome day that it was not worth while, a waste of mistaken effort. Without sense of something served, one's labor in retrospect is but the smoke of a futile fire that did nothing but consume one. As Studdert Kennedy has put it—

> I must have God. This life's too dull without,
> Too dull for aught but suicide. What's man got
> To live for else? I'd murder some one just
> To see red blood. I'd drink myself blind drunk
> And see blue snakes if I could not look up
> To see blue skies and hear God speaking through
> The silence of the stars.

In this yearning for peace, that lies in the finding of authority, the Christian church finds its opportunity and its warrant. It calls men to worship. It provides an atmosphere of worship. It lifts before men a God to be worshiped. To create the atmosphere in which man may experience revelation is the highest office to which church and minister may aspire.

The supreme means at their command is the life of him in whose loyalty and devotion the ideal became concrete. "I must work the words of him that sent me"; "The words that thou gavest me I have given unto them"; "I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do." In the presence of this free and obedient spirit the worshiper hears the voice of something sacred and inviolate in the universe to which one must be faithful or be forever false to one's self. In obeying this voice the yearning for authority is satisfied.

II

A second yearning of men is for self-expression. There are hidden glories in him that he has not yet revealed. He walks among men a prince in disguise. He finds courage to accept his published self because of his comforting knowledge of his unpublished self.

Freudianism has told us much about our buried life. Like icebergs we float through the sea of consciousness, but a fraction of us above the water line. Each individual mind is indeed a "trackless mystery," a universe of lost worlds—worlds that were never framed or recorded by reason—never "anchored to the conscious stream of thought."

Some of these lost worlds are dark, never really recognized; desires never admitted or confessed or willingly entertained. Yet they are nevertheless very much a part of us. They are worlds where life goes on and the inhabitants are our manifold and sometimes warring selves which break out in fierce rebellion when our defences are low.

But not all these lost worlds are dark worlds. There are swinging planets, brilliant as a star; paradises in which we dwelt in the bigger days of youth; lost Edens from which sophistication drove us out. The sacred precincts of these fair worlds are thronged with the unexpressed.

Man Both Artist and Hero

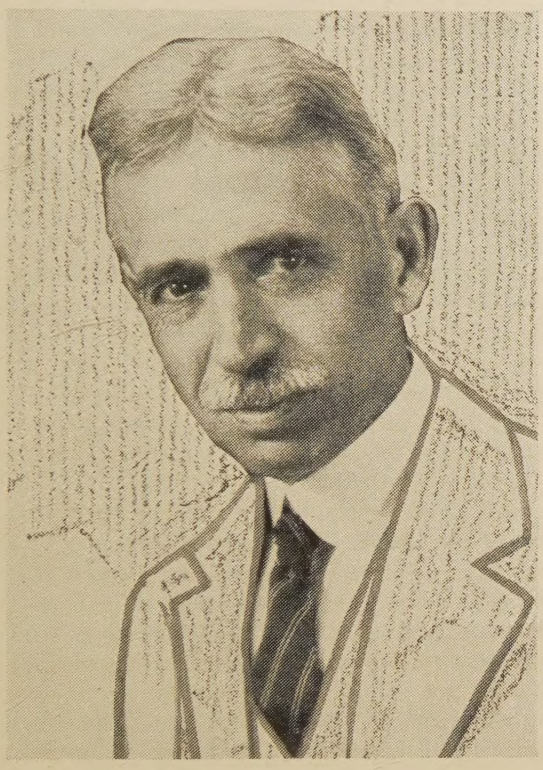
Buried in every soul there is both an artist and a hero. Every child is an artist. He loves to make something. He brings his attempts at beauty to his comforting mother for her admiration and approval. The crude drawings of childhood are soon shamed by the dreams of youth. Most men discover early, however, that they have not enough talent for the career of an artist. The strictures of environment and the necessity for bread deny the artist fulfillment. But he is not dead. Buried, he lives and longs and waits.

Every child is likewise a hero. He feels himself born for bravery and daring, for some immortal deed of courage. He identifies himself with every chosen hero and fights with panting breath every knightly battle of which he reads. He is too self-conscious to confess the hero that he feels himself to be. Soon he finds that civilized life is too safe and tame to offer many opportunities for labeled deeds of heroism. But the hero is not dead because he is not brought on the

stage of spectacular action. Buried, he lives, and longs, and waits.

Down under the commonplace of the conventional level at which most of us live there are selves which are not commonplace, longings that are not conventional, waiting for their opportunity. Experience early convinces us that the art and heroism of which we are capable must be expressed in the field of spiritual living.

Our sense of defeat and failure, our regrets and remorses—what are these but the judgments of the disappointed artist and hero that are within us? Thornton Wilder, famous author of "The Bridge of



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San Luis Rey," says: "An artist is one who knows how life should be lived at its best and is always aware of how badly he is doing it."

The Gift of Imagination

To bring to expression these potential selves is the work of the imagination. With unerring spiritual etiquette, the guest of our imagination calls forth to meet him the one of all our manifold selves that corresponds to him in rank and splendor, whether it be a Hollywood artist, an angel of mercy, or a knight from Arthur's halls. To fill the imagination with forms that shall call forth the most loyal selves within is the sublime office of Christian worship. It brings on the stage the world's supreme artist and most divine hero. When we see him, we feel the best that is in us rising toward the surface. His beauty stirs the beauty that is within and his heroism wakes the hero sleeping in our little boat. We are told that Jesus once stood before a tomb in Bethany and called to the friend that was buried within, "Lazarus, come forth." We do not need to regard this as factual history in order to find it useful and illuminating. Whether or not it is a true story of what Jesus did to a buried body, it is strictly and beautifully true of what Jesus does to buried personalities. Standing before the tomb of habit and convention in which our truest selves lie imprisoned, he calls in friendly imperativeness to the friend of his that is within every normal soul, and that friend comes forth to meet him. The dog long trained to tameness hears the call of the wolf to the wolf within him and runs away to his native and splendid wild. Long John in the house of service, half-forgetful of who he was, hears the horn of Robin Hood and remembers. The hero sleeping in the tame domesticated spirit hears the call of Christ and springs to arms. Recall the words of Tiburzio in Browning's "Luria" as he paid homage to the glowing integrity of Luria's life:

> Keep but God's model safe,
> New men will rise to take its mold.

If Christian worship fulfills its function it will furnish an hour in which men's imagination will be caught by the possible splendor of living, and their brave selves within them will come forth to the light.

III

The third yearning of men is for comradeship. It is not good for man to be alone. He needs company. Friends sustain him in difficulty and support him in pain. Their belief in him keeps him from falling. But there come frequent hours in his pilgrimage when he is a lonely man, though surrounded with friends. There are gateways of grief that are turnstiles through which men must pass one by one. In the Valley of the Shadow men walk in single file. They tread the winepress alone, their feet red with the blood of crushed and broken life. The voices of one's friends are faint and distant sounds. They lack authority and reality. Their words of hope kindly spoken seem but idle chatter.

There is only one voice then that can help us and that is a friendly voice from the heart of the universe. Without that voice the heart breaks and life's courage and joy are spilled on the ground as water from a broken glass.

The great hours of moral decision and endurance are solitary hours. Brave living is a lonely adventure. And there is no sufficient company but the comradeship of a good God. The life of the artist and the hero is too difficult to lead unless this is a universe that is interested in that sort of thing.

It is not only difficult but futile. For there is no adequate justification for the cost of living that kind of life.

A Mechanistic Universe

The air is filled with voices today announcing that this is purely a mechanistic universe. It is wholly indifferent to individual welfare and moral values. It may have some concern for the welfare of the race but it has no time to spend on little units of life like you and me. Virtue and character, right and wrong, are purely human concepts. Men engage in battle be-

tween right and wrong, but the universe knows nothing of this. It takes no sides. If this be so, then man's battle for spiritual life is a costly folly and a waste of the spirit.

There are a multitude of men and women who are asking with trembling lip: "Is this a friendly universe?" Is there a spirit in it on the side of men? Can a heroic soul feel at home in it? Can he count on God in the difficult and lonely business of living?

With these questions articulate or inarticulate men vainly struggle. It is the church's privilege and business to give them an answer. Where else can thev turn for so clear and grateful a reply?

In the course of Pilgrim's progress Christian came to the house of the Interpreter, where he knocked on the door. The master of the house asked him what he would have. "Sir," said Christian, "I was told by the man who stands at the gate at the head of the way that if I called here you would show me excellent things such as would be helpful to me on my journey." Then the master of the house bade him come in and showed him a picture of a great person with the law of truth written on his lips and a crown of gold over his head and he said: "I have showed thee this picture because the man whose picture this is is the only man whom the lord of the place whither thou art going hath authorized to be thy guide in all difficult places."

The Heavenly Interpreter

The house of Christian worship is the heavenly Interpreter. It assures the traveler that this is a friendly world. It asserts the validity of man's moral nature. It sets him free from the intimidations of science. It enfranchises his soul. It gives him the only answer to his questions that will gird him with courage and keep him from spiritual fatigue. "Without religion," says Bernard Shaw, "we are all cowards." Unless there is cosmic company for men in their spiritual endeavors we are not only cowards but blameless cowards. The noblest things in us are our dreams and visions. What guarantee have we that these dreams that we entertain of making this a fairer world are anything more than dancing will-o-the-wisps except that there is a Spirit walking through this universe that calls to us in our dreams to rise and follow him. There is no more sublime, vital and life-giving task entrusted to men anywhere than the spiritual interpretation of life. There is no greater argument than the reality that our moral sense finds in Jesus Christ. If this universe is not friendly to his way of living, if it casts no vote as between Jesus and Judas, then it is not a universe worth living in. The only universe worth living in is one to which the spirit of Jesus gives a clue.

There are many voices today that predict the passing of Christian worship. Let no man be alarmed. The "end is not yet." The church rests upon man's profoundest and most enduring yearnings, the yearning for authority, for self-expression and for companionship. So long as it meets these yearnings, it will endure. For then it will be a temple, and men will never be without a temple.

Rock or Sand?

By Clarence E. Macartney

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell: and great was the fall of it. Matthew 7:24-27.

THE two houses built by these two men were exactly alike. They had the same walls, the same kind of roof, the same doors, and the same windows; but when the storm was over, one was a heap of rubbish, the other stood just as it was before the storm. The difference was due to the fact that one was built on sand, and the other on the rock. Such, Christ said, is the difference between the man who hears and obeys and believes his words, and the one who does not.

All forms of belief are under assault today. Multitudes want religion without doctrine, and morality without religion. To believe anything is held by some to be a sign of mental inferiority, or the evidence of lack of knowledge. This campaign against faith moves along many different paths. In one form, it is a stark denial of all the great propositions of religion—God, the soul, sin, immortality. These are names which for ages have deceived and frightened the people and must now be got rid of. Under another form, the anti-faith movement carries on its banner the watchword that religion must now be reconciled with the latest hypotheses of science and modern thought. Under a more pious form, the movement declares itself to be a movement back to the Christ of the New Testament, who has been "distorted and disguised" by theological decorations. It is not an effect to destroy faith, but to bring the world back to simple New Testament faith.

Dismissing the Supernatural

But, whatever the name employed, the movement is one and the same; that is, an attempt to dismiss what is supernatural in the Christian faith; separate it from all that is regal and exclusive and mandatory, and whittle all creeds down to a vague and pious nebulosity. We hear such terms as "the solidarity of the race," "social consciousness," "the brotherhood of man," "creedless love." How far this movement has progressed, we may judge from statements made in the introduction to a recent book, "Princes of the Modern Pulpit in England." Here we find sentences like the following: "Instead of mounting to his pulpit as to a throne, the modern preacher is rather in the condition of being summoned into the witness box." . . . "Many preachers would find it difficult to state pre-

cisely their beliefs as to the divinity of Jesus, and what would still more horrify the preachers of a generation ago, some of them would say that precise statements are not essential. Let a man explain Jesus as he will, they say, so long as he is sure that the spirit of Jesus dwells within him, filling his whole personality with love and peace and serviceableness. . . . And there is a difficulty in speaking of the cross. The central emphasis is placed on the life and teaching of Jesus, where for centuries it had been placed on his atoning death. Atonement is a word seldom used in the modern pulpit; so, also, is blood. The old plan of salvation is scarcely known by name to the occupants of the modern pew." "Thirty years ago this gospel would scarcely have been considered a gospel at all."

Certainly it would not have been considered a gospel at all thirty years ago, or nineteen centuries ago, when the gospel was first preached. It is what Paul calls, "Another gospel which is not another." It busies itself with telling man what to do, and seems to know and care nothing about what God has done for man. Back of all this is the guiding conception that it makes no difference at all what a man believes about Christ, the cross, or anything else, so long as he tries to do what he has been taught is right.

> For forms of faith, let graceless zealots fight,
> He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

P. T. Barnum was not only a great showman, but also something of a homely philosopher. He once observed that more people were humbugged into believing too little than were humbugged into believing too much. The danger today is that people should be humbugged into believing nothing.

Does It Matter What One Believes?

Does it make any difference what a man believes? Any difference to himself, to his neighbor, or to God? It certainly does. Belief always influences character and conduct. All action is the expression of some kind of belief. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. At the beginning of the world's history, the woman believed what the tempter told her about a suggested course of action rather than what God had said. The world is still trying to recover from the difference that belief and disbelief made. But, one says, "I want something more modern than the Garden of Eden." Very well, let us take our own city. In this day of grace, here are two young men who come to the city to pursue their ambitions and make their way in the world. Both have been taught that moral conduct is the foundation of true success, and that there can be no lasting success, honor, or happiness without industry, purity, and honesty. One lives as if that were so; the other lives as if it were all a myth. Regardless of any temporal success which may fall to either, the man who disbelieves, or disregards, those great moral principles is a man vastly different from the man who believes. He wears the same kind of clothes, goes in and out to his work, mingles in his social circle, and yet a yawning gulf separates him from the honest, clean, and honorable man.

But, one may say, when I say that it makes no difference what a man believes I am not thinking about his attitude towards these fundamental laws of morality, but his belief or disbelief in the doctrines of Christianity, such as God, Jesus Christ, the soul, sin, heaven and hell. What shall we say to this? In the first place, it is proper to raise the question whether there can be any moral laws and standards without belief in God, the great Author and Law-giver. A Moslem guide, taking me through the great mosque of St. Sophia, lamented the great falling off in the numbers of those who came to worship and pray at the mosque. This, he said, was full of peril and menace because, he added, we must all have some kind of a belief in God to help us to do right and to keep us from doing wrong. What he said was a tribute to the power of belief upon conduct. Washington said the same thing in his Farewell address, an address to which the country might well turn today, both because of its political advice and its moral teaching:

> Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded through the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

In the second place, it is not difficult to show the place that belief has taken in the development and preservation of what we call Christian morality and ethics. Here is a man who says, "My religion is the simple religion of the Sermon on the Mount," or "My religion is the religion of the parable of the Good Samaritan. It makes no difference to me what rank you give to Christ, or what theories you may hold as to his cross, or his resurrection, or as to the future events." The man who says this does not seem to understand that he would never have heard of the Sermon on the Mount, or the parable of the Good Samaritan, had it not been for the church's doctrine of the person of Christ as the eternal Son of God and the Savior of the world. What Christ said in the Sermon on the Mount or in the parable of the Good Samaritan has been carried down to the men of this generation only through the proclamation of Christ as the world's redeemer.

The Value of Creeds

It is easy, too, to speak disparagingly of the theological and metaphysical controversies in the first Christian centuries over the person of Christ, the relationship of the divine in human nature in his person, and the doctrine of the trinity. Carlyle speaks with contempt of the struggle of Athanasius against Arianism and the spectacle of a whole world convulsed over a diphthong; that is, whether Christ was of *like* substance or of the *same* substance. But between the two conceptions of Christ was all the difference between a Christ who was only a superman and one who was a divine Redeemer. It was necessary at that time to have clear definitions of what the church believed concerning Christ in order to save Christianity from the poison and corruption of the subtle theories

and strange conceptions which were arising within the church.

Fairbairn puts the case well in his "Philosophy of Religion" when he says, "Without the metaphysical conception of Christ the Christian religion would long ago have ceased to live. Clear and sweet as the Galilean vision was, it would, apart from the severer speculation which translated it from a history into a creed, have faded from human memory like a dream which delighted the slumbers of the morning." Because of the native rebellion of the heart against God and the restless questings of the human mind, definitions of Christ, of God, of sin, of salvation, are just as necessary today as they were in the third and fourth centuries, and perhaps more so.

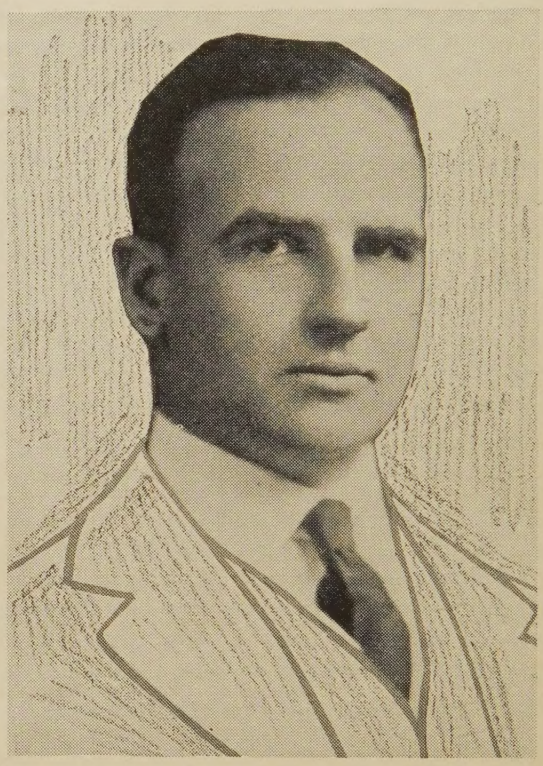
When we speak of the great Christian beliefs, we do not mean opinions as to certain relationships in the Godhead, or opinions as to the order of events in the future. For example, it is an interesting question, and one on which great Christians have held different opinions, as to whether God decreed first to create or to redeem. It is an interesting question, too, as to just how the two natures, the divine and the human, were joined and expressed themselves together in the person of Christ. It is also an interesting question as to the order of certain events connected with the second advent of Christ. But on all these subjects, men can be real Christians, firm believers, and yet differ. The great thing is, that they should believe that God *did* create, that Jesus *was* the Son of God, that he died for our sins, and that he will come again to finish his work. As to those great beliefs, men cannot differ.

Uniformity Not Necessary

Nor, when we speak of the necessity of the great beliefs, do we mean a flat uniformity as to matters in Christian doctrine about which men may differ. When Charles V was trying to bring the world to a uniformity of belief, and employing the thumbscrew and the rack to that end, he was one day experimenting with three clocks in his retreat at Yuste. Unable to make the three clocks keep exactly the same time, he gave it up in disgust, exclaiming: "Here I was trying to make a whole world believe exactly alike, and I can't even make three clocks keep the same time."

Nor, when we speak of the necessity of faith, do we mean that conduct is of no importance, but rather that faith affects conduct and produces good works. If we say with St. Paul that we are justified by faith, we also subscribe to the demand of St. James, "Show me thy faith by thy works." We remember, too, what St. James said to some of the people of his day who had a formal, but not a living faith: "Thou believest that there is one God? Thou doest well. The devils also believe and tremble." St. James was right. The evil spirits in the gospels never made any mistake as to the person of Christ, how he was the Son of God, and inasmuch as they trembled, their theology was to be preferred to that of the people James has in mind, who believed, or said they believed, in God, but did not tremble. We remember, also, those words of St. John, how the love of God in our hearts must declare itself by Christian sympathy, forgiveness, and kindness.

Faith is never declared to be easy. The great believers were the great strugglers. There are still obstacles in the way of belief. One obstacle is the universal praise pronounced upon certain worthy benefactors of the human race, who certainly were not notable for their faith. When they die, salvos of applause echo over their graves. The Twenty-third



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Psalm and St. John's beautiful 14th chapter and St. Paul's great words in I Corinthians were read over the body of Thomas Edison, of whom it was well said that he lifted the world out of its shadows. But the dispute has already commenced as to what he really believed. The dispute over what Lincoln believed has been going on for seventy-six years.

Whatever the faith of men like these, there certainly was a difference between their faith and the attitude of such a man as the great Protestant defender of Verdun, Marshall Neville, who before his death, requested that there should be no eulogy pronounced upon him, but that the "great affirmations of the Christian faith" should be spoken over his grave. When someone asks, "If human benefactors, like Edison and Lincoln, never joined the church, never confessed their faith in Christ, why should I?" the obvious answer is, that the grand affirmations of Christian faith and hope are in no way affected by the belief or unbelief of even the greatest of men. The thing to ask oneself is this: "Am I to follow the example of even great and noble human benefactors, or shall it be my purpose, first of all, to do the will

of God, the will of that God who has taught us that without faith it is impossible to please God?"

Failures of Believers

Another obstacle in the way of holding to faith and belief is the not infrequent failures and breakdowns and inconsistencies of those who do believe. It is not for you and me to know the hearts of men; but if we did, we should probably see how in every instance where men of professed faith have failed and broken down, there has been something wrong, some inexcusable disregard of moral safeguards. We must remember, too, that although a Christian may stumble and fall, it does not follow that he falls away from God. David fell, but not away from God. When the believing man stumbles and falls, he still knows the way of repentance and can still believe in a forgiving God. Still always it will be true, as Christ said, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness."

Sometimes, too, we get a little impatient or discouraged with the slow progress of our creed. Thomas Carlyle and Bishop Wilberforce were one day walking together and speaking of a mutual friend who had died. Suddenly Carlyle said, "Bishop, have you a creed?" "Yes, and the older I grow, the firmer that creed becomes under my feet. There is only one thing that staggers me." "What is that," said Carlyle. "The slow progress that creed seems to make in the world." Carlyle was silent for a moment, and then said, slowly and seriously, "Ah, but if you have a creed, you can afford to wait." Yes, a man who has a creed can afford to wait. He has a platform upon which he can stand, and no world convulsion can shake it down.

Peter's Grandest Moment

When Peter gave expression to his faith in Jesus as the Son of God, Christ responded with his memorable blessing: "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonas, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." That was Peter's grandest moment. Not even the Peter of Pentecost's great sermon stands so high as the Peter of this grand confession. Do not think of your faith and belief as a sort of straitjacket in which you were placed and where your liberties are restrained, but think of it as the grand privilege and opportunity of the soul. The rains will descend, the floods will come and the winds will beat upon the house of your life. Would it make any difference then, whether your house is built on the sand or upon the rock? Temptation, affliction, disappointment, disease—all these storms will test the foundations of life. Would it make any difference then, whether you believe in God, in Christ, as a Friend and a Savior, and in the home of the blessed beyond the shadows of this world?

The climax of all faith is faith in Christ as the Son of God and your Savior. Jesus said to the blind man, who had been cast out of the synagogue because he stubbornly persisted that Christ had restored his sight and that he must be a man from God, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" That is the greatest question that God can ask of man. It is the greatest question that man can ask of man. The greatest answer that man can give is to say, "Lord, I believe." Even if there are times when he must add what the troubled father of the possessed boy added, when he asked Jesus to heal his son, "Help thou mine unbelief."

Vision — Maker of Men and Nations

By Stanley I. Stuber

Where there is no vision, the people perish. Proverbs 29:18.

I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. Acts 26:19.

GOD, in old times, revealed his will to men in visions. As one turns the pages of his Bible he cannot help but notice this fact: that God opened the eyes of men in a mysterious manner and permitted them to look beyond the ordinary things of life, into the realm of the eternal.

In a vision Abraham was assured that he would have seed in his old age; seed which would establish a mighty nation. In a vision Jacob beheld a ladder set up on the earth, the top of which reached to heaven, and there were angels ascending and descending upon it. And in the vision God spoke to Jacob saying: "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee." Jacob was so greatly impressed by this vision that he was forced to admit: "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not."

In a vision Moses beheld the angel of the Lord in a burning bush and received his commission to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt unto the land of promise. It was by means of a vision that the Israelites were shown the glory of God, that Elisha witnessed the translation of Elijah, that Eliphaz (one of Job's "comforters") learned the miserable end of the wicked. And it was by means of a vision that Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord in the temple and heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And Isaiah's answer was: "Here am I; send me!"

The prophets, in visions, were instructed in the ways of God. Thus Zacharias, John the Baptist, the apostles, Paul, Cornelius, and John on the Isle of Patmos were all, in visions, led into the secrets of the highest.

I. Behind the Symbols

In such a manner did God reveal himself to those of old time. But is there anything strange, anything very mysterious, about this? I think not. No more so than in the visions which we receive from God today. It is all too wonderful for words, being spiritual; and I dare say that God reveals himself to men today in just about the same fashion, and as often, as

he did to those "saints" of biblical days. Only, it may be, his newer revelations today are taken more for granted.

We must take into consideration, when talking about visions, a special means of expression—that of symbolism. It is quite impossible to describe the spiritual in purely spiritual terms; the spiritual experience must be translated into physical terms, into a symbolic language. This is just the reason why so many people do not understand the real meaning, the real value, which lies back of the physical sign. The spiritual reality lies beneath the symbol; not in the symbol, as some are prone to believe. Therefore it is impossible to understand the significance of visions, without an understanding of the symbolic language which is used in describing them. In the realm of visions walk figures of speech!

So it is with philosophy, with science, with poetry, and with all spiritual religion. It is impossible to comprehend what most philosophers are talking about until the meaning, the connotation, of their terms are fully understood. Science has recently adopted a sign language of symbols, in its attempt to explain the great mysteries of the physical universe. Poets have always sung in symbols. Sometimes they have even coined new words in the attempt to express their emotions; ordinary words often lose their meaning. Sometimes genius does not even use words at all; it uses music—music, which speaks a universal language and is capable of expressing the deepest emotions of the soul.

This feeling of incompetence to express in words the deep notes which beat in the heart is well presented in this bit of verse which I found recently. It is called, "Figures of Speech":

> How may I capture in uncertain words
> The splendor of this all-too-fleeting day—
> This amber sunlight and these scudding birds
> Swift winging to the south? How can I say
> That Autumn is a dagger in my breast,
> A fever in my veins, a cry too deep
> For any answer? Even though the west
> Draws down her crimson coverlet of sleep,
> And microscopic voices turn to praise,
> Still I am silent. Though I know full well
> The scent of burning leaves, the poignant haze
> Of early dusk, these things I cannot tell
> To any man or mountain, child or tree;
> They are too near the crying heart of me.

Let us not think that the days of visions are passed. Our great men and women still have their visions. There are mystics still in our midst. And when they attempt to relate their experiences to us they too, like the prophets of old, have to resort to picture, to a symbolic language.

If any man in modern times has had real visions it is Rabindranath Tagore, great mystic and poet of the east. In his latest book, "The Religion of Man," he tells of his visions: visions which came to him especially during his periods of meditation. In those moments, as he says, "unexpected trains of thought ran across my mind like a strange caravan carrying the wealth of an unknown kingdom." (What beautiful picture language!) In these precious moments life appears before him as a unity, and he says that all things that had seemed like vagrant waves are, in these experiences, revealed to his mind in relation to a vast boundless sea. You can plainly see that Tagore speaks of his vision-experience in a symbolic fashion. It cannot, however, be fully explained in words; for, as he confesses, his religion is not a matter of knowledge or facts: "it is from vision."

So I do not greatly wonder at those visions recorded in the Bible, for I realize that God reveals himself today as gloriously, and as mysteriously, as he did in the years of old. Just so long as God *is*, men will have visions of him; and from him. When God no longer speaks directly to men we shall seriously question his existence. We will not be cheated out of his present revelation. Our God is the God of the living, and if the living will only open their spiritual eyes they will see him in visions—but they will never be able to put into cold words just what they saw and felt. Spiritual religion, the religious experience, is quite an individual affair.

II. The Price of Vision

In the second place, let us turn from these special and intermittent visions and consider vision in the terms of foresight, insight, inspiration and especially, idealism. Of course this is a much more common use of the term "vision." We often speak of men of vision. Those who have vision, we say, are worth a great deal to industry, society, government and to religion. They are the ones who deserve the big positions, although they are the ones, in reality, who are made to pay the price for the advancement of truth, righteousness and liberty.

In speaking of President Wilson not long ago, Bishop Freeman of Washington said:

> With clear vision he saw the growing need of ties that must bind nation to nation in a great confederation. He envisioned a new world order where the arbitrament of arms should give place to calm and quiet counsel. He seemed to see on the horizon a new day where, in truth, the Prince of Peace should be universally regnant in the hearts of men. . . . We did not heed his call. . . . Thus we deal with our chosen leaders. They rarely command us in life, we come to appraise their worth only when the events of the passing years confirm their judgment and crown their lives with a diadem of immortality.

Recently I have been studying the life of Roger Williams, the apostle of soul liberty. The pious Puritans would not have the like of him around, so they drove him away. Yet, as James Truslow Adams has said, their colony "lost what it could ill afford to spare—a mind of wider vision than its own."

Our prophets tell us of the better way, of the better day ahead; they even tell us just how to achieve them, but in our foolishness we laugh them out of court and give them no attention. We little ones, who cannot see beyond the present, think that no one else can either; but we only deceive ourselves. The great souls, in the quiet of meditation, walking on the basis of known facts into the future, can see, in spite of us:

can see beyond the day into that great haze of possibility which lies on ahead. There is nothing especially mysterious about this kind of vision. It is largely a matter of enlightened common sense under spiritual control. It is looking at the facts from both sides. It is dealing with reality; it is following natural laws. In this world there are certain laws of cause and effect: if the cause is given, the effect is bound to follow. Thus the prophets of old could see what would happen to Israel if she persisted in her loose living and low thinking; if she still continued in her idolatry and in

Stanley I. Stuber

her sins of the flesh. It would mean ruin and death!

Likewise the Psalmist knew what would happen to the righteous—they would be as trees planted by the streams of water, that bring forth plenteous fruit, and all their ways shall prosper. But not so with the wicked—they would be as chaff which the wind blows away, and in the end, "they shall perish!" Jesus, in like manner, could foresee what would happen to those who were brave enough to follow his commandments to do them—they would be as the house built upon a solid rock, which the winds and the storms of life could not possibly destroy. And, moreover, Jesus could also predict that those who failed to keep his teachings to do them would be as those who build their houses upon the sand; when the winds and storms of life come, as they are bound to, their lives will not be able to stand the testing—they will go to smash, and great will be the ruin of them.

Spiritual Laws

In Proverbs we are told that "where there is no vision, the people perish." Now this is a natural law of life; it is absolute truth. When people lack vision they dry up and blow away; or, in modern times, they throw bombs at each other and are blown—God only knows where. When people rely upon material things, when they desire nothing more than prosperity, they perish. Little by little greed eats them up as a cancer; gradually their hearts turn into stone; in time their own gold chokes them to death. When people fail to put their trust in God, then the evil one takes them by the hand. When people cheat, lie and steel; when they are selfish, proud and materialistic, they gradually seal their own death warrant with their own hand.

It takes no prophet to predict these things; anyone with an ounce of sense cannot escape seeing these conclusions. God is not to be mocked, not even in 1932; it is still true that he who sows the whirlwind will also reap a whirlwind—with interest! But he who sows peace and love will reap them again, even unto a thousand fold.

If we fail to walk in the ways of the Lord it will do no good to repeat up to a thousand times: "The temple of the Lord; the temple of the Lord; the temple of the Lord." For as Jeremiah put it: Change your ways, establish justice and mercy and charity in your personal and your social life, or—or you and your beautiful temple will both fall in ruins at the day of judgment. "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

III. Practical Idealism

In order to bring this text to a little sharper focus let us, in the third place, state it this way: Where there is no high idealism, the people perish.

Leaders with great ideals! How the world needs them, especially right now, to get us out of this terrible moral and economic calamity which we, in our blindness, have brought upon our own heads. Idealists are the real, the true, saviors of the nations.

The great mistake we have made in the past is that we have poked fun at our idealists. We have been guilty of saying: "Oh, he is only an idealist, only an idle dreamer; he doesn't matter. What we need is practical men." Ah yes, practical men! Practical men who brought on the world war! Practical men who have accomplished a worldwide financial depression! Practical men who have started the ball of progress rolling in our direction, but know not how to keep it from rolling over us! Yes, practical men; big business men!

What fools we have been! It has always been the visions of men which have made nations great and enduring; it has been the idealism of men which has kept our faces turned toward the future. In this so-called practical and materialistic world, we have forgotten the very source of our national and spiritual inheritance. We have even tried to dry up the very springs of living water, without which our souls must die.

Indeed, what fools we have been! We have rather pitied youth because of its idealism. Ah, we are the ones to be pitied; we who have lost our own youthful idealism! How dauntlessly we should cling to the lofty ideals of our youth: ideals far more precious than

gold. How we should endeavor always to retain the high hopes and the beautiful visions which come to us before the conservatism of age sets in. Never laugh at the idealism of any young person, for as Bernard Shaw said not long ago, "Always be polite to *young* nobodies; you never know how they will turn out. If you must kick somebody, kick the old."

To be sure, some of us do feel like kicking the old —sometimes; I mean those who began with high idealism, but who have lost it along the way. To me it is a great pity to see those who were once leaders in government and religion gradually lose thir idealism. It makes me feel as if I might lose mine also in the years to come. It is only as I come to know men like Emerson, men who never grow old, that I take courage and say, "I will be like them in spite of the pull of time. Age must never rob me of my visions!"

Christian Idealists

There is no doubt that we are in need of idealists just at the present moment: idealists in government, like the good, old statesman Briand who lately left us; idealists in business, who will dare to change the present economic system for the better; idealists in religion, who can see beyond the boundaries of their own little parish or denomination. Yes, right now we need men who will, in all phases of life, hold the ideal before our eyes, who will tempt us to do our best, who will lure us toward the higher truth.

No one can be a Christian without being an idealist. For the Christian takes the ideal view of man—he sees in every man, no matter how low he may be in the scale of society, no matter what the color of his skin happens to be, the possibility of Christlikeness. The Christian takes an ideal view of the world—it may, in time, he believes, become the kingdom of God; so he, in spite of all the odds, keeps on praying "Thy kingdom come," and continually works for its realization. The Christian takes the ideal view of God; he thinks of God in the highest possible terms, that of personality, and calls him "Father-God." If, in time, we come to a higher conception of being than personality, then that greater conception will be applied to God.

He who follows Jesus, follows an Idealist. And as he was perfect, so he sets perfection as our goal. We must, in our lives, take on God-likeness. Is this foolishness? Only to the foolish. To the wise it is eternal life. "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

We had better take note of this fact before it is too late. Vision, in the form of idealism, is what will save the people, and the nations. Men of vision, who have seen the ideal and who are willing to risk their all for it, are the saviors of the nations.

And whence come visions? Visions come in youth; visions come upon the mountain-tops of human experience where the air is pure and the horizons are wide; visions come in the quiet places of the soul and in the temple of the Lord; visions come to those who, in times of stress and trial, look unto God for strength and guidance. It will be the men of vision who will save us, for God, first of all, will save them. Then they will be as leaven; then they will be able to lead us toward the light, being able to see the light themselves.

To us God has given a heavenly vision, even Jesus Christ. And if we, as each day draws to its close, can say with Paul, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision," then we shall overcome the world and live, not for the day, but for eternity. Then we too will become leaders of vision, daring to look through the veil of the present into the spiritual world of God's truth. The spirit of truth is on our side and the kingdom of heaven can be realized here on earth as it is in heaven—if we faint not.

Where there is no vision, the people perish; but, where there is vision, the people are saved!

The Pain of Thinking

A Baccalaureate Sermon

By Peter Ainslie

While I was musing the fire burned;
Then spake I with my tongue.—Psalm 39:3.

THESE are the picturesque lines of an oriental poet. An occidental might have expressed the same idea in a more matter-of-fact sentence, something like this: While I was considering, my conscience was stirred and I said what I thought. Whether expressed in oriental or occidental phrasing, out of this ordinary experience we observe the common laws of thinking. In another Old Testament poem in which Moses is described as standing before a burning bush which was not consumed, he said, "I will turn aside and see why the bush is not burnt." It was another way of saying, I will face the fact of this thing and think it through.

When Jesus affirmed that we shall know the truth and the truth shall make us free, it was the reminder of the progressive development of mankind. At first we are blind, then we see in part, and after long processes we come into possession of the whole. One generation establishes standards and another generation modifies them or abandons them entirely, in order to make way for new standards. The changes in these traditions and customs are usually attended by painful experiences, especially on the part of those who take up the leadership of the change. As we go forward there must be breaking down of prison houses and a tearing away of obstructions. The seed in the ground must burst before the sprout is sent forth. The calyx must be torn away before the rose bud can open its petals and release its perfume. Civilization has progressed through periods of pain.

The Power of an Idea

The greatest force in the world is an idea. If it advances, it must be touched into adjustment by pain. Never has an idea come into the world except amid storms of protest. These protests have taken various forms, depending upon the time and the nature of the idea. Sometimes it has been ridicule or scorn, or impris-

onment or exile, or death. But when an idea becomes definitely and passionately a part of personality, there is no power in the world that can prevent its advance. It becomes indifferent to all protests and takes no account of the cost for its establishment.

History abounds in instances of adventurous thinking. Socrates probed into the political and religious life of his time by buttonholing young men and leaving them questions to answer that marked the dawn of a new day in the thought of the world, for which he was sent to his death. Jesus laid down his carpenter's tools and journeyed over the hills of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, saying that the kingdom of God was not political, but was a spiritual condition within us—reverencing each other and building in reality a brotherhood of people around our Father, God; and they sent him to the cross. Savonarola called the people of his time to reform their political and religious life, and they strangled him and burned his body. Up from the peasantry of Bohemia came John Huss, who ventured to exercise freedom in preaching the gospel, and they burned him to ashes. Columbus made a path across the Atlantic, and they sent him home in irons. Bruno thought beyond the thinking of his time and they burned him at the stake. Grotius dared to think of adjusting international disputes by reason rather than by physical force, and they condemned him to life imprisonment. Hugo thought in terms of humanitarian adjustment of political conditions, and they sent him into exile. Lincoln broke the fetters of Negro slavery, for which he was rewarded by a bullet from a pistol. Tolstoi set up new standards in the social and religious life of his time, and he was forthwith excommunicated. Gandhi attempts to make a road to larger freedom for his people by the method of non-resistance, and he is given a jail sentence.

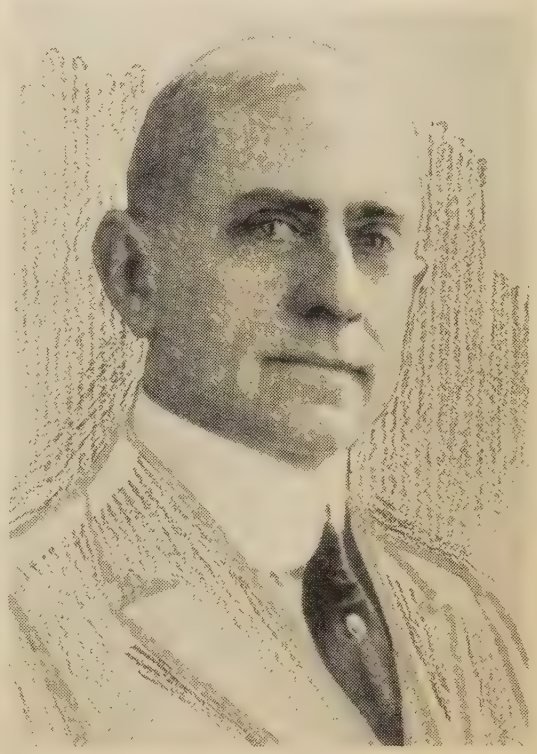
The Obstruction of Fear

Hundreds of others might be mentioned. From Socrates in the most cultured nation of his time and Jesus in the most religious race of his time, to Gandhi, in the freest colonial empire of these times, the pain of thinking has been written into the civilization of the world.

At the portals, through which thought seeks to pass, stands fear, the obstructionist of progress. Many are afraid to break with the dead past over which has been thrown a halo of exaggerated reverence. Many have been afraid to break with our present day customs, around which is the atmosphere of respectability. Many are afraid to break with living friends because broken love is hard to mend. Many recoil at the mere suggestion of ridicule or scorn or dismissal or excommunication, which are mere trifles as compared with the discovery of a new truth or a new interpretation of old truth, whereby we advance into new experiences with wider horizons.

But these times have in them less fear than many periods of history. Universal education and the characteristic adventure of these times have been powerful factors in lessening fear. Nevertheless, some regard these times as the most dangerous. I dissent from any such position and, therefore, I regard these times as the most hopeful in the history of the world. The pioneers in thinking have made thinking less painful for today. The adventurer goes forth with larger freedom and he seldom goes alone. But be this as it may, he still has to pay something for his advance, but far less than the early pioneers paid, for ridicule, scorn, dismissal, excommunication, and imprisonment mean far less today than they meant years ago. We face conditions and think them through, and we are less afraid to condemn the wrong and uphold the right.

Had fear prevailed, we should know little about astronomy, geography, medicine, surgery and education, or even religion. Hippocrates adorned the medical school at Cos with his genius; but, if men had not thought beyond this illustrious father of medicine, we would still be under the shadow of that ancient and elementary school. Pythagoras was the forerunner of Copernicus and he was followed by Kepler, Galileo and Newton, each advancing beyond the other. Equal in beauty to the oriental poet's expression as the basis of this sermon, is Kepler's exclamation as he advances beyond the thinking of his time. He cried out: "O Almighty God, I am thinking thy thoughts after thee."



Peter Ainslie

It is the story of pioneers. In art Cimabue and Giotto were the forerunners of Raphael—a long distance between them and ridicule all the way. In modern architecture, Palladio was scorned by the architects of the world as he set up new standards in building. When Torricelli discovered that the air had weight, he was ridiculed everywhere, as was Marquis de la Place when he affirmed that there was light before the sun was outlined.

Christian scholars of the thirteenth century forbade the study of the testimony of the resurrection of Jesus; but, in later centuries, other Christian scholars pushed aside the protests and searched thoroughly into every testimony, lighting up the resurrection with a marvelous and unfading glory. There is nothing too sacred to be questioned and nothing too ancient to be compared with modern standards.

The Task of Education

There is an inexcusable fear in modern education, which has lent dullness to the classroom, whereas the classroom ought to be the laboratory for adventurous thinking, thinking that takes us beyond where we are. I sometimes feel that the timidity of the schools has been a hindrance to general education. Where is there another place so well suited to solve our problems as the classroom—teacher and student thinking together, two generations attempting to make a pathway for the third generation? Transmissive education has a place, but the dogmatic must give way to the dynamic. Creative teaching is the need of the times and the project method meets that need.

Education must be made more creative by facing toward the unfinished task of the kingdom of God, linking one generation with another, the present with the past, in terms of interest, activity, and social participation, which enables the student's purpose to emerge, in distinction from the teacher's purpose, and find paths of activity and methods for the execution of purposes.

Three Outstanding Problems

There are three great problems in which we are entangled.

The first has to do with religion. If we are a member of any one of the Christian churches, we are entangled in two hundred and fifteen brands of Christianity. It makes very little difference which one of these we are members of; but whichever one it is, that one is carefully guarded by its denominational traditions and separative policy. It is an ugly condition and has already become anachronistic. The whole world is talking about understanding and fellowship. But here is a divided church, pushing its way into these times, seeking to establish its different brands of Christianity, not only in America, but in all parts of the world; and, at the same time, these various churches have not learned how to behave toward each other. It is a tragic condition and calls for serious thinking and adventurous action.

The second has to do with politics. The world with its vast continents and oceans was never so small as now. Distance has been wiped out. What occurs in Calcutta may be known an hour afterwards around the world. We sit at our radios and hear distinctly a human voice from across the Atlantic as though the speaker were under our own roof. We can no longer stand much friction between the political governments. National proximity has made international understanding a necessity. Consequently the political governments have outlawed war by a solemn agreement. Another world war is, therefore, supposed to be unthinkable, yet the nations appear either to have forgotten it or not to have understood it and are talking in terms of suspicion and fear. The London conference was a most striking instance of this. With the outlawry of war as their basis, no conference between nations ever had such an opportunity in the history of the world. But the conference appears to have thought in backward terms, back beyond the signing of the peace pact, rather than in forward terms based upon the world-wide outlawry of war. There is surely need in this field of free thinking and courageous voices, for leadership in creating more friendly attitudes between the nations.

Saving from Economic Disaster

The third problem has to do with economics. There are millions of people in the world who are starving and America has more than enough food, but we do not know how to equalize this condition. We stare at it and go on about our business. A part of our population is enduring the remnant of the slavery of old days. We talk about it, but we have not enough sense to find out how to lift the burden and give stability to all concerned. These conditions cannot be solved by rash action. Fundamental principles are involved. It is a challenge to American schools to find the way to do it. Such conditions cannot go on interminably. They make for disaster. These must become personal problems. Every one of us is directly or indirectly involved, whether we wish to be or not. It is not fair to dodge them or defer solution of them. We in these times must think through whatever conditions surround us and adventure into a solution.

Education can deal with many things. It has a wide field. Primarily it must deal with human relations, involving our daily lives, our natural desires, and our proper behavior. These are fundamental in the foundations of civilization, as well as maintaining a civilization that is in process of building. Knowledge and personality cannot be separated except at the disadvantage of both.

It may be said by some that this field belongs more particularly to the churches. Let them try to do it. But they cannot do it for several very definite reasons. First, our present educational system, including the public schools, colleges, and universities reaches more than nine-tenths of our population with definite instructions, whereas the churches, Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant, reach less than a half—perhaps a third is a fairer figure. This would include Sunday schools and parochial schools. And, second, the churches are so divided that when they teach, they so frequently teach against each other, so that they have almost forfeited their right to teach. And, besides, how can the churches teach behavior when they do not know how to behave among themselves?

What a Diploma Means

Conditions being such as they are, the hope of making a better civilization lies largely in our general educational institutions, functioning in the field of ethics so directly, and adventuring so heroically, that human relations will become as distinct a factor in

college life, as long years ago we thought knowledge of Greek and Latin and mathematics and the sciences comprised education. It is a field of adventure. A diploma is not a guarantee of knowledge; it is a guarantee of the holder of tools whereby knowledge may be acquired. It is a great privilege to be a student. It is a great honor to hold a diploma. Every graduate is under obligation to the times in which he lives to face the facts of the world and to make new paths that will contribute to better relations among churches, among nations, among races, among classes—throughout our world citizenship!

To take up chain and compass in an attempt to find new paths is a challenge to every student, irrespective of the pain that may attend one's thinking. Before us is an unexplored world. No one need be afraid to enter into it.

Hard Times and Soft Religion

By Albea Godbold

And he came and sat down under a juniper tree.—I Kings 19:4.

IN ELIJAH'S experience we see hard times and with them, soft religion. Elijah was religious. None could doubt that. The day before he had wrought mightily for God against the false prophets. But hard times came. Jezebel's threat against his life and the juniper tree episode prove it. Hard times had a bad effect on his religion. Learning of the threat, the prophet arose and went for his life. In dejection under the tree he prayed for death. How weak—soft—his religion appears in hard times! It failed him.

Hardship has a way of revealing the quality of one's religion. If your religion is founded on the sands of prosperity the storms of hard times will beat it down. If it is set upon the rock of vital faith it will stand the tests of adversity. Hardship shows whether or not your faith has stamina.

Now, we have fallen on hard times. By this time everybody knows it, for the fact has been persistently advertised. The depression is worldwide. No nation has escaped the economic backwash. All are suffering. Over the world millions of men are out of work. Most of them are honest men willing to give an honest day's labor in return for bread. But there is no work for them. The wheels of industry in many places are silent, because there is no market for goods. The battalions of agriculture are marking time or marching backward. The markets are glutted with an excess of agricultural produce.

We Are Disillusioned

Certain facts about these hard times make them all the harder. For one thing, we are being disillusioned. Many thought the business world was insulated against hard times. Would-be prophets declared depression could not come again. One fatuous magazine article claimed it had become possible for every man to get rich. It was thought that certain factors had formed and guaranteed for the future a closed circuit of prosperity. The Federal Reserve banks had stabilized finance. Mass production was making goods at minimum cost. High wages were guaranteeing unlimited buying power to the public. Advertising and high pressure salesmanship were selling the goods. But somehow a "short" has developed in that closed circuit of prosperity. We have been living in a fool's paradise. What could not happen has happened. The disillusionment is particularly discouraging.

Again, we are disgusted with ourselves, or somebody else, because the country as a whole denied the existence of this calamity until it had completely unsettled the economic world. It is admitted now that the flood of prosperity began receding five years ago. Calamity cast its shadow before it as early as 1927. But leaders would not admit the truth. They sang, "All is well." If anybody suggested hard times they replied, "It is a state of mind—your state of mind." Thus, held in line by prosperity talk instead of real prosperity many who really were feeling the pinch of depression kept quiet and tried to make themselves think they were prosperous. Cities would deny that they had unemployment; it might hurt business. Newspapers kept studiously quiet on the subject. Of course, matters became worse as we clung to the prosperity fallacy. Then with startling suddenness came the stock market crash of 1929. After that, talk of prosperity did not ring of sincerity. In the grip of depression we now think that earlier admission of the truth might have forewarned and forearmed us against the evil day.

Poverty in Midst of Plenty

What is more, it is the irony of fate that we should experience this depression in the midst of plenty. In some past reverses money or necessities were scarce. But not so now. Banks have money, factories have goods on hand, and the market is glutted with food supplies. A society tremendously efficient in production and almost hopelessly inefficient in distribution! How astoundingly absurd! Can it be that our society is stupid?

We see now as never before that no man lives to himself and no nation lives to itself. No nation is self-sufficient, and all become less so every year. With higher standards of living, few if any families can produce their living at home even on the farm. And in a civilization that has changed rapidly from agricultural to industrial, millions must buy nearly all necessities. Without work they have no money and immediately their suffering is great. Today everyone is dependent upon another, or upon many others. We are as dependent on each other as bricks in a wall. We cannot stand unless we stand together. Tennyson says the whole round world is bound by gold chains about the feet of God. One can now say that it is bound together by economic chains. Today national

isolation is a fiction. When one section suffers others will suffer.

Such facts about the hard times solemnize us. Some are bewildered, others are whipped in spirit.

Various Effects of Hard Times

This morning I am citing the hard times not to ask what we shall do about them, but to ask what is their effect on our religion and what will be the effect of our religion on hard times.

The religion of some heroic souls is holding up well under the strain. Verily, there are those who can bear all things and do all things through Christ who strengthens them.

But others are like Elijah. Thinking the prosperity of yesterday was a sure sign of heaven's blessing, at that time they championed religion and called down fire from heaven on sin and irreligion. But now that the Jezebel of hard times has threatened them they too have arisen and gone for their lives. They have gone a day's journey into the wilderness of despair, sought out a juniper tree, there to sit down and bemoan their fate. Like Elijah, some pray that they may die, and, not waiting for Jehovah to answer the prayer, bring about the answer by self-destruction.

Isn't it true that popular religion booms with prosperity and that it wanes with hard times? Many moderns simply have not advanced beyond early Old Testament religion. They interpret prosperity as God's approval of their way of living, and they feel like going to church and singing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." But hard times are nearly always interpreted as a sign of God's disfavor. In such seasons they don't feel like going to church and praising God. If they feel like singing at all the tune is, "Hark! from the tomb how mournful the sound!" It fits the mood better when one is under the juniper tree.

Once in a tennis tournament I defeated a player admittedly my superior in tennis skill. A friend of his said to me afterward, "That man is a good front player. Once in the lead he is almost invincible. But from the start you played furiously, got the lead on him, and it took the heart out of him. He simply cannot play his best when trailing."

Too many people are good "front Christians." As long as they are winning in the game of life—prosperous—they are very religious. But before hardship they wither away. Thereafter they dwell under the shade of the old juniper tree. Seeing them there it is hard to believe that they were triumphant in the faith yesterday.

The Church Today

We hear it charged that much modern day religion is a sort of business-men's-noonday-luncheon-club spirit. Its appeal is largely to those well-to-do in life. It is an embellishment added when life is satisfactory to us.

One might refute the charge by challenging the assumption and pointing out that religion brings the satisfaction, and not satisfaction the religion. Also, it may be shown that many wealthy people have no interest whatever in religion, while multitudes of poor folks are loyal to Christ.

Yet it must be admitted that many who are not high on the social and economic ladder pass by religion apparently because of their position. They seem to think that religion is for people better off than themselves. Church leaders are deeply concerned because the church is not reaching the poor and the laboring classes as it once did. The church does not always act as if it had a mandate to minister to the poor and the underprivileged in society. Nor do the working

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classes always feel that the church is their friend. They fear that the church leans toward wealth and power. There may be something to the claim that modern day Christianity is appealing largely to those who are well off materially.

It is hinted that there is a direct connection between prosperity and church revivals today. Dr. Fosdick says he thinks he could successfully defend the thesis that every reform has its economic accompaniment. He means that reforms are not brought about until economic forces are favorable. For example, the church and the Anti-Saloon league could not have gotten national prohibition when they did without the support of labor, the railroads and big business. Now the church is making very small if any gains in membership today. Some branches noted for their aggressive evangelism actually show net losses in membership. Some interpret these facts after this manner: there is a tendency today to "get religion" when we have prosperity, and not to get it, or to let it go, in hard times.

If there be any justification for these charges and

hints, it is a sad commentary on the quality of much present day piety. It means that we have a soft religion. Such religion is an ornament added to life like music and pictures in some homes—merely a luxury in prosperous times, not a vital part of life.

In my work as a pastor I not infrequently meet church members and non-members who frankly say that they do not come to church because they are in straitened circumstances. They say that when business goes wrong or they are out of work they haven't the heart to try to be religious. Of course, I remind them that their welcome at God's house is not dependent upon their economic standing and I urge them to come and worship. Of what real value is the religion that does not stay with us in hard times? The faith that lapses then is lapsing when we need it most. Inspiration, comfort, and the heroism generated by faith are needed far more in the darkness of hard times than in the light of prosperous times.

Christ's Religion Is Heroic!

Some may wish to remind me that there is a difference between real religion and church attendance. Granted. But after all, the strength of the churches is a pretty accurate gauge of the strength of religion in the land. Hard times test religion and reveal the fiber of which it is made.

Christianity is not by nature a soft religion. If your religion has failed you in hard times, I believe you have some other kind. The religion that Jesus lived and that Paul spread from Antioch to Rome flourished in hard times. It spread like fire in tinder among the poor and the slaves, those who suffered most from economic hardship and social injustice.

It was not love alone that caused the first Christians to have all things common after Pentecost. Hard times encouraged them to try voluntary communism. They had a bread line, as seen from the fact that some were appointed to wait on tables. Without that plan some would have gone without or had to go begging on the streets of Jerusalem. With that plan none had very much, as evidenced by the fact that Paul was soon taking a collection in his mission churches for the poor saints at Jerusalem. But despite the hard times they had enough religion to make them praise God daily in the temple. Religion, instead of being an ornament for prosperous times, was used by the disciples as a mighty support in hard times.

A Faith That Holds

Soon persecution came to make times harder yet. They actually received what Jezebel threatened to give Elijah. Stephen was stoned to death. The disciples, except the apostles, were driven out of Jerusalem. They were treated much as the "night riders" of post-civil war days treated the Negroes. As a small boy in Mississippi at the beginning of the present century, tramping over a country road to school, I remember several occasions when I saw Negroes on that highway, carrying what little worldly goods they possessed, going they knew not where to seek new shelter, because "night riders" had ordered them on short notice to be gone from their homes. I remember still the forlorn and dejected appearance of those black people. We are glad that the law, backed by public opinion, put a stop to such terrorizing long ago. But the point I am making now is that the early Christians were treated as unceremoniously and unjustly as that. Yet poverty plus persecution could not separate them from their faith. They clung to it. The persecution which aimed to blot out their religion spread it abroad.

Times were hard for Paul. At times he had to earn bread by making tents. He was stoned, beaten with rods, and had to endure the hardships of travel in ancient times by land and by sea. But he never interpreted hardship as a reason for abandoning his faith. That to him was a reason for holding to faith. Indeed, he said with fine insight: "We triumph in our troubles, knowing that trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope—a hope which never disappoints us, since God's love floods our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." When all others forsook him he declared that the Lord stood by him.

Verily, Christianity is a religion of confidence and hope to those in trouble. And are we not always in trouble? The times are always hard. Of course, when we are passing through such a depression as besets us now in retrospect we can see that other days were really better. But we did not think so then. We had our worries. High prices made living hard. We need the virile faith of Christianity at all times.

Not a Passive Religion

Not only does real Christianity sustain the soul in hardship, it also sets out to correct the evils that cause hardship, in so far as that is possible. The early disciples were not passive Christians in an evil world. They turned it upside down, as reported in Acts, and, as the old preacher said in preaching on that text, "It needed turning upside down to get it right side up, and they were the chaps to do it."

One of the most hopeful signs that the church still has life and power is its strong insistence that justice, mercy, and brotherhood shall be put into our political and economic relationships, in order that needless suffering may be done away now and avoided in the future. Christianity does not only give a word of hope to the individual soul in hard times; it aims to redeem society from hard times.

But if Christianity is a virile religion why doesn't it get folks out from under the juniper tree today? Well, it has kept some from ever going under the tree. It has gotten some others out. And it may be said of still others that they won't give it a chance to get them out. But if it can still be charged that much present day piety is suited to prosperity and cannot survive hardship, I think there is an explanation: there was something in the religion of the early disciples which may be lacking today.

Any fair analysis of the religion of New Testament Christians, it seems to me, would show that it had two elements which made it a powerful support in hardship: first, a genuine personal experience of God in Christ; second, a firm faith that no matter who

or what was against them God was for them. Those were the two strongest points in their religion, and they are two of the weakest points in much present day religion. Today many pretend to be religious, but they do not have a joyous, uplifting, personal experience of God. Also, there is an ever present question in the modern life about the friendliness of God. We are not sure that he is for us. Indeed, many think that he is against them. Hardship proves it to them. Religion without those two important factors finds it hard to stand in the evil day.

Of course, some think that those two certainties are impossible until many questions about pain and suffering are settled. I believe in the reasonableness of Christianity, but I must say that if we cannot have a vital, dynamic, sustaining faith until all our questions about evil and suffering are answered, we will wait long for that faith. No religion and no philosophy that we know has ever answered all questions on this subject. Plato, the greatest philosopher, does not answer them. Jesus, the greatest religionist, himself the Logos, the Eternal Word, does not answer them.

God and the Suffering

Jesus simply said that God is on the side of the man having a hard time. He is with the poor, the lowly, the hungry, the meek, the persecuted. Those who labor and are heavy laden can turn to him and find rest and support for their souls. These and many other beautiful promises are an assurance for the heart and not an answer for the head. It takes a trustful heart, as well as a reverent mind, to launch out on them and prove their validity.

But such an attitude of trust soon discovers that Jesus was right. Perhaps the soul discovers first of all that trouble is inherent in our earthly existence. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward," as Eliphaz says. Then God himself is perceived to be a suffering God. The cross reveals that fact. Therefore, he must suffer with us when we suffer. And clinging to God in suffering the soul finds that the lower deeps of the heart are flooded with the sense of the sustaining power divine. By that means the soul makes trouble pay its way. The outward lot however hard is made to minister to the inward life. The truth of Paul's claim is established—all things can be made to work together for the good of them that love the Lord. Strange as it may seem, those who cling to God in suffering are not only hurt less by suffering, but also they are made perfect through suffering!

Such triumph in suffering may not be comprehensible to one who has no vital experience of God in Christ and no conviction that no matter who or what is against him God is for him. I would not claim that it is. But it is a fact that men and women with that experience and that faith do triumph over trouble and thus capitalize what otherwise is a serious handicap to happy living and blessed hope.

Achieving such a victory involves a leap of faith. The early Christians made that leap and their faith was abundantly rewarded. Can you make that leap?

Man's Adventures With the Divine

By Harry W. Kimball

Canst thou by searching find out God? Job 11:7.

WE ARE told that the first lesson taught to children in the schools of Russia is that "There is no God." For six months the best religious journal in America is carrying on a "Conversation About God." Apparently we are not quite ready to say there is none, but are ready to admit that it is a debatable question. Dean Sturges said recently, at St. Paul's cathedral, "God has become a remote hypothesis," and Professor Whitehead of Harvard is quoted as declaring that "the modern world has lost God and is trying to find him again." All this is enough to show us where the foci of religious interest are at the present time. They are concerned with God and with his relation to men.

Yet only the other day a French book was published with the title, "God the eternal torment of man"—a vivid way of setting forth a great truth. For man has always been searching for God, he has ever been tormented with the desire to find him, he has always wanted to learn what lies behind the surface facts of life.

Man Forever Seeking God

And there is no likelihood that man will ever give up this quest. Indeed the greatest adventures for man await him as he goes forth to find God in this modern world, and the greatest discoveries of tomorrow will without much doubt lie in the realm of the spirit.

The spiritual history of mankind in all its long annals is the story of man's search for the Infinite. When primitive man first felt that there was a power behind the rain and thunder and within the sun and the earth, his simple mind had to have a visible image of the thing he felt. The unseen could only be comprehended through the seen. Many a man in genuine faith carved an idol for himself in his effort to make his God real.

As all who have read the Greek and Roman myths know, the gods of these nations were very much like human beings. They had all the characteristics of men. They were cruel and lustful, they were jealous and vindictive. They could be offended at what man did, but their wrath could be appeased by sacrifice, and most of the religions of the ancient world were concerned with the problem of winning the good will of the gods.

The Hebrews' God

The God whom the Hebrews worshiped during their pilgrimage in the wilderness was a warrior God. They had to have that kind of God because they were always coming in contact with other tribes. They had to have a God who would fight for them. Their victories therefore they credited to the help of Jehovah, and

their defeats to the fact that somehow they had displeased him. This Jehovah of the wilderness days was a wandering God, a part of their nomadic life. He went along with them, and so they carried the ark and a tent within which Jehovah dwelt.

But when the Hebrews settled in the promised land and their government became more elaborate, they thought of God as King, and for a long while this symbol of a kingly God held sway. It lingers with us still, for we sometimes sing—

> Come Thou Almighty King,
> Help us Thy name to sing.

Only in the dreaming minds of the prophets and the poets did God become more than a kingly person, more than the lawgiver in heaven, and the divine ruler upon his throne. But to these sensitive souls God came to be all that is best, all that is finest in man himself. To them, as he is to us, God was man's noblest raised to the nth power. Hosea wrote a new page in the story of man's spiritual insight when he etched the picture of his own great love for a woman who had proved unworthy of his love. His wife had left his simple and peaceful home for sinful adventures in the great city. And yet, despite her waywardness, Hosea found that he loved her so much that he was willing without a word to take her back to his house and bosom. Then the stupendous thought flashed like a bolt from heaven—If I, poor weak mortal that I am, can have a love like this for a woman such as she has been, how much more wonderful and strong must be the love of God! To see that God must be better than our best was the peak point of all prophetic vision.

God as Father

Then came Jesus and called God, Father. This symbol of the divine was not original with Jesus, for it is found scattered here and there through the pages of the Old Testament. It had come down from the patriarchal days when the whole household looked to its head for guidance and protection. But it was the natural symbol for Jesus to use in an age when the patriarchal family still prevailed. It was the only symbol that he could use to convey successfully his thought of God. He wanted to make his hearers feel that there was a being upon whom they could depend, to whom they could go in trouble. who would care for them and protect them against the evils of life. In those days it was the father who did this, and even now most of us still cling to the picture of God as the

A Pastoral Prayer

By Frederick W. Norwood

O GOD, men have naught to bring Thee; may they not take something away? They come to Thee with shadowed faces; may they not receive Thy light upon their faces? They come to Thee encumbered with their sins; may they not turn away, not merely with pardon, for that may be pronounced by a neutral judge upon his judgment seat, but may they not carry away a revelation of Thy grace and new strength in which they may overcome?

They come to Thee burdened with cares and anxieties; may they not go away with Thy peace in their heart? They come to Thee unable to see the shadowed pathway that they tread; may they not see but a part of Thy glory and the pathway anew in its light? They dare not, cannot, look upon Thy face; may they not look after Thee with deeper understanding and with greater peace?

Behold how many of us turn our eyes wistfully upon some things that have passed by. They have gone beyond the reach of our hand, they cannot be recalled and our hearts are bitter with their memory, but may we not become aware of Thy presence, Thy restraining grace, Thy help, even in the things that are past, and may not some things that are irrevocable be transformed by the light which Thy shielding hand scarce conceals until they become things of wistful beauty and of promise?

Many are afraid to look into the future, for though they cannot see its shape, they tremble before its mystery. May they not see the rainbow promise of Thy grace, making the future to be not fearsome but even to throb with invitation?

O Lord, let there be wrought quiet miracles within our being while we pray. Let there come to us some of the gracious experiences that have always come to the people of God when they have truly prayed; experiences which made them aware that they had touched the hem of God's garment and knew that they were healed.

O Lord, we submit our hearts and our lives to Thee, desiring that they should be changed, that over them should blow the soft winds of heaven and upon them should fall the light from Thy throne, that all our ways and all our thoughts might be made different because we pray.

O Lord, let there be wrought within us strange though quiet things, things we could not reveal, of which we could not tell, but things as mysterious and potent as are wrought by blood made pure and flowing through the veins in tides of rich life.

O Lord, let there be among us the presence of One whom we know so faultily as scarce to know Him at all, but whose presence is the coming of the Holy Ghost with fire. And this we ask in His name.—Amen.

Father of his children, believing this to be the best symbol of the Infinite.

In the Metropolitan Museum of New York there is a fine collection of scarabs, charms which the ancients wore. A beautiful one of dark blue has carved upon it a mystic figure, and under the symbol these words: "Fear not, Upwawel is beside thee." And who is Upwawel? The Jackal God. And in simple faith, twenty centuries ago, the Egyptian carved that symbol. What foolishness! you say. There is no reality to a Jackal God; there is no God like that to protect man. No, and yet this man of the far past was not wholly wrong. He was right in thinking that there was an

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unseen power upon whom he could depend; wrong when he thought that he lived in the form of a jackal. He was right in thinking that there was a friendly someone; wrong in the symbol which he gave to the one in whom he trusted.

So through the ages the symbols of God have changed, but the truth which the symbols try to say have become more and more clear. And perhaps the symbol of God as Father is not the final picture which the world will have of him.

God Is Our Comrade!

In fact, I would suggest that for the present age there is a symbol of God which even better than that of Father conveys to our minds the truth which is at the heart of things. That symbol is Comrade. It is true that the family is still central in the social structure of our towns. We are zoned to single-family houses and in this way we emphasize the integrity of the family group. Yet, even so, the Father no longer holds the unique and commanding place that he did in other days. The best type of family life today is one in which there is genuine comradeship. The finest love between man and woman is the relation of real comrades, sharing the responsibilities and the joys of living. The father who succeeds best at his job is not the stern lawgiver but one who is a real comrade of his children. And the modern family which fulfills most completely its function in today's life is one that shares in all the activities of the community.

A Definition of God

If you want a hard definition of God, something to try the teeth of your mind on, here is the one Professor Wieman gives: "God is that which sustains and promotes to the utmost the mutuality of man with one another." Mutuality is a good word, but comradeship is a better one. What Dr. Wieman tried to say was that God is the spirit of comradeship. The apostle John put it in the finest way when he said, "Every man who loves is born of God and knoweth God."

I think of God, then, as my Comrade. Walt Whitman wrote:

> Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and the knowledge that pass the argument of earth.
> I know that the hand of God is the elder hand of my own,
> And I know that the spirit of God is the elder brother of my own.

If God is our elder brother, then he is our Comrade and life holds something very much worth while, and for us all there is real fellowship with the Infinite.

If you study the life and teachings of Jesus you will find that while he used the symbol of Father, yet his own attitude towards God was that of comradeship. He said, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." For him there was comradeship with the Infinite. He and God had joined hands and hearts to perform the unfinished tasks of the world. This is my own thought of God, the one from whom I get my comfort and my strength. I am a comrade with him in the tasks in which he is engaged. He needs my help, and if I help him he will help me. This world is not good, not entirely so. Browning was altogether too optimistic when he wrote:

> God's in his heaven,
> All's right with the world.

God at Work Now

How impressively it has been brought home to us in these perilous days that all is not right with the world, and so far as I can see the only way to make it better is to get more of the God in whom we believe out of his heaven and into the world. There are immense possibilities in man. We are only at the dawn of humanity's day. God is at work now, as he always has been and ever will be, seeking to have his dreams for mankind become actualities on earth. That is my hope and that is my faith. So when I do my little bit for justice or for peace or for church unity or for any other cause which I believe to be of

God, then I am working by his side. We are comrades, the Infinite and I.

The Passion of Comradeship

Just now our greatest problem is to get moral passion into human hearts. Just to wish for a better world is not enough. Just to long for it will not bring it to pass. We need men and women mastered by a great passion for righteousness. For myself, I find that passion fed by my conviction that God is a Comrade of mine. He and I are working away at the same tasks. He is using me and somehow my life becomes the channel of his purposes.

This is the faith which brings peace and joy into my life and convinces me that nothing evil can befall me. This is the faith which casts out all fear from my heart, and makes me eager to use heart and head and hand in the service of mankind.

Just now we all need very much an Almighty Comrade, one who shares with us our life and will work with us while the day lasts. Friends, I tell you that God is a Comrade like that.

Now, just to sum up the long trail over which we have passed in so short a time. Through all the ages man has been seeking God and he has never sought in vain. His idols have been crude and his word symbols imperfect, but through them he has never failed to find something of God.

Canst thou by searching find out God? Yes, and why is that answer true? Because God has also ever been searching for man. And, if both God and man are searching, seeking for one another, we may be certain that they will find each other. They always have and they always will.

And in this day and generation, eagerly seeking him, I think that the best word symbol to describe the Infinite Spirit whom we find is that of Comrade. For God is the leal Comrade of this world of men. He is a Comrade who never fails.

QUOTABLE VERSE

If Jesus Came Back Today

IF Jesus came back today
What would the people say?
Would they cheer Him and strew the way
With garlands of myrtle and bay
As they did on that distant day
When He came to Jerusalem?
What would America say
If Jesus came back today?

. . . . . .

We fashion great churches and creeds
But the heart of the people still bleeds
And the poor still rot in their needs.
We display with pride His cross
In the midst of our pagan life
While we hug to our hearts the dross
Of our selfishness and strife.
What sacrifice have we made
To live the love He prayed?
What willing blood have we shed
To do the deeds He said?
To be popular and well-fed
We forsake the way He led
And follow a ghost instead!

VINCENT GODFREY BURNS.

God Hears Prayer

IF radio's slim fingers can pluck a melody
From night—and toss it over a continent or sea;
If the petalled white notes of a violin
Are blown across the mountains or the city's din;
If songs, like crimson roses, are culled from thin blue air—
Why should mortals wonder if God hears prayer?

ETHEL ROMIG FULLER.

Changeless

GOD will not change! The restless years may bring
Sunlight and shade—the glories of the Spring,
The silent gloom of sunless Winter hours;
Joy mixed with grief—sharp thorns with fragrant flowers.
Earth's lights may shine a while and then grow dim.
But God is true! There is no change in Him.

Rest in the Lord today and all thy days
Let His unerring hand direct thy ways
Through the uncertainty, and hope and fear,
That meet thee on the threshold of the year;
And find while all life's changing scenes pass by
Thy refuge in the love that cannot die.

EDITH HICKMAN DIVALL.

The Seeker After God

THERE was a dreamer once, whose spirit trod
Unnumbered ways in thwarted search for God:
He stirred the dust on ancient books; he sought
For certain light in what the teachers taught;
He took his staff and went unto the Wise,
And deeper darkness fell about his eyes;
He lived a hermit, and forebore his food,
And God left visitless his solitude;
He wrapped himself in prayer night after night,
And mocking demons danced across his sight.
Resigned at last to Him he could not find,
He turned again to live among mankind—
And when from man he no more stood apart,
God, on that instant, visited his heart!

HARRY KEMP.

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Making Assistant Pastors Out of Laymen

By Roy L. Smith

THE hope of Protestantism is the voice of prophecy in the pulpit. He who stands before a congregation to preach in the name of Jesus Christ should be an expert in spiritual matters. Above everything else he should be able to interpret the significance of spiritual facts and train his people in an understanding of spiritual laws that they may achieve independence of mind and spirit through their mastery of life. No expertness in anything else will atone for dullness and spiritual impotency in the pulpit.

The sin of which the preacher is most frequently accused is "laziness." To the average layman much of the preacher's work seems like recreation. The writer was one day deeply engaged digging out material for a sermon when he was interrupted by a genial member of the congregation who said, "I wouldn't have stopped but I saw you were only reading and I thought I would visit a while." *Only reading!* The layman who only reads for recreation finds it difficult to understand how reading may become work for the preacher.

• *The Sin of Doing Too Much!*

The sin of which the preacher is more frequently guilty is the sin of overwork—he does so much that the people of his church ought to be doing. He teaches the men's Bible class, leads the orchestra, acts as scoutmaster and attends to the business affairs of the church. His wife sings in the choir, presides over the Ladies' Aid, and supervises the Junior league. The son of the parsonage is the church janitor, plays in the orchestra and teaches in the junior department of the church school. The oldest daughter plays the piano, heads up the young women's missionary society, has charge of the primary department and arranges the Epworth league socials. When such a preacher moves away *he takes the working organization of the church with him.* The real test of a minister's efficiency is not the amount of work he does, but the amount he is able to get his people to do; not what he accomplishes, but what he leaves for his successor to begin working with.

The exacting demands of the modern church are such that no conscientious preacher ever goes to his rest with the thrill of knowing that his work for the day is done. There is always a book waiting to be read, a little more work on the sermon that ought to be done, at least one more call that should have been made.

The most tragic sin of the church is the way in which it carelessly squanders its preachers. It asks them to come to their tasks with exalted spiritual enthusiasm, spend expensive years in intensive training, and then puts them at work which a twelve-dollar-a-week typist ought to be doing.

Roy L. Smith

Of course no sincere minister is ever too proud to assume plain tasks, but the church presumably expects him to do a spiritual work, and even in the smallest churches this work is big enough to engage his every waking moment to the full. No preacher is "too big" for his place. The smallest congregation in the land offers the "biggest preacher" more than he will ever be able to do. To ask him, therefore, to spend his time in janitor services means that spiritual tasks must be left undone.

Every preacher needs help. No man is able to do all the work of any church, unaided. But comparatively few churches are able to employ assistants and good ones are hard to find. Most of them anticipate the day when they will be in charge of congregations and look upon their assistantships as temporary stepping stones. The solution of the problem is in the employment of laymen. A good sales manager does not go out and get all the signed orders. He instructs his salesmen and inspires them to go out and get the business. That minister is the best administrator who trains the most people in the tasks of a church and then puts them to work.

There is no mystery about church work. The people in the congregation are of exactly the same sort that the average person meets in his daily work. They respond to the same psychological suggestions. If a layman is successful in his daily work (and there is no legitimate talent that cannot be invested for the Kingdom) he can be trained to do successful church work. An analysis of the church's program reveals the fact that there is only one task to which laymen cannot be assigned regularly and for which they cannot be given complete responsibility. That task is preaching. This is the minister's unique responsibility. Even here the layman can occasionally share. But everything else belongs to the laymen.

• *"Unemployment" Among Laymen*

Prof. Whiting Williams says that the dominating motive of men is "the wish for worth," the longing to feel that we are essential to something or someone. To achieve this feeling of importance men will endure fatigue, suffer pain and toil interminable hours. The church that admits people into its membership and then gives them nothing to do cannot hold their loyalty long. To be left idle gives the impression of being unappreciated. To be employed is to be loyal.

Scan the church records and discover the significance of unemployment. It is the inactive members who are usually delinquent in their church pledges. They are the ones who do not give to missions. They are the ones who do not subscribe for the denominational paper, come to prayer meeting, rally in the hour of emergency or attend services regularly. They constitute that great migrant membership which goes about from church to church hunting for some preacher who "appeals" to them.

The most effective clergyman is the minister-manager. To him the members of his congregation are the forces he has at his disposal—the capital he has to invest for the Kingdom. He must deploy them in such a fashion that they may be the most productive of dividends. He must know their fitness in order to put them at work where they will produce most and be happiest. If they are untrained he must train them until they are effective. If they are unwilling he must persuade them. If they are timid he

must lead them. If they are discouraged he must inspire them.

The work of laymen in many churches is limited pretty largely to church chores. But in operating even a busy modern church there is only a limited amount of ushering to be done, only a few are capable of singing in the choir, many are unable and many are unsuited to work in the church school. *If all the people are put to work, new occupations must be developed.*

• *Finding New Tasks for Laymen*

A feeling of spiritual inadequacy prevents many laymen from taking their places in the more vital phases of the church program. There is a vague impression among them that some expertness in theology is necessary. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Indeed, it is doubtful whether theology has ever converted a soul. Theology is, rather, for those who have made their beginning in Christian living and need training in religious thinking. Laymen who know little or nothing about the intricacies of theology often make the most valuable assistants because they have had a definite religious experience. Nothing is so convincing to the man who has a spiritual hunger as the testimony of some other man who has had his hunger satisfied.

The easiest field in which the untrained and timid church member can begin work is the social service department. Folks who are spiritually unprepared to pray with the unconverted can administer relief, exhibit the spirit of kindliness, or help organize the community for the expression of a moral conviction. If they are properly guided in their work they will soon be led to discover for themselves that the cause for much material want is a spiritual deficiency. The writer has seen many a timid soul begin working in some "practical" field and develop, by the very pressure of the needs he is compelled to face, into a wise and eager spiritual guide. As they come face to face with responsibility they are, themselves, forced back upon spiritual reserves. Almost before they know it they find tides of spiritual strength welling up within them of which they never supposed themselves capable.

• *Training Laymen for Evangelism*

Two classes for technical instruction should be organized in every church: a class in teacher-training and a class for personal workers. The improved pedagogical standards of the public schools make it impossible any longer to put untrained teachers into our church schools. Moreover, to use ignorant and unprepared people just because they are willing is a crime against childhood and the Kingdom of Christ.

In the case of personal workers the major task is that of overcoming the natural fear which prevents most people from attempting the work. Any pastor will agree that it is never easy to do personal work. The tremendous issues at stake, the delicacy of the matter, and the diplomacy that is necessary involve the work in great responsibility.

The secret of successful lay-evangelism is in the training. And any pastor can train his laymen according to his own ideas. The imported evangelist may have hobbies and doctrines to which the pastor cannot heartily subscribe. But in working with his laymen there is no outsider to interfere. He can make them the kind of workers he wants. He can train them to emphasize the points he himself considers vital.

• *Teamwork that Gets Results*

One successful pastor-evangelist invited one layman to accompany him for three successive evenings in pastoral work. During those three evenings the layman heard the pastor's presentation of the case and watched him as he undertook to bring about a decision. After each evening's work they retired to the parsonage and talked over the evening's results together. The next week the pastor took another layman and gave him the same experience. He then called the two laymen together, gave them some final pointers and sent them out as a team to call upon certain individuals. In the meantime he took a third layman with him for training. At the end of the fourth week he had two teams of two trained men each. One team had had one week's experience in independent work. When they had had three weeks' experience together he formed two new teams with a trained worker and a novice in each team. By thus following up his workers, holding meetings for them in which personal experiences were related and further instruction was given, this pastor soon had a band of fifty people who were capable of the finest type of evangelistic work. More than four hundred new members were added to that church that winter. A widespread use of this plan by the American churches would mean such a revival as the nation has never known, without a line of newspaper advertising or a single cent spent on hired experts.

• *Fifteen Rules for Wise Pastors*

The minister who attempts to make assistant pastors out of his laymen, may well consider seriously the following rules:

1. Every member of the church must have some responsibility for some work in connection with the church's program.
2. Let the pastor spend his time on the workers rather than on the work.
3. Make use of every opportunity to open up new lines of activity to absorb the energies of growing laymen and enlarging congregations.
4. Trust laymen with responsibility as soon as they are capable of accepting it.
5. Count every unemployed member of the church as an indictment of the administration.
6. Maintain a constant emphasis upon the necessity of spiritual development and growth as a pre-requisite for work.
7. Arrange for public recognition of workers for services rendered.
8. Never trespass upon any authority after it has been given.
9. Be patient with the awkward worker. He may, in time, become your most valuable assistant.
10. Count the assignment of the task as but the first step. After that comes guidance and training.
11. Never allow yourself to become jealous of the results obtained by some brilliant layman. His success is yours.
12. Never allow an honest worker who has done his best to be humiliated.
13. Never assign a task without asking for a report on results.
14. Attempt to make all workers feel that the success of the cause is greater than the triumph of an individual.
15. The leader who has no enthusiasm inspires none.

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WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE

FOR the past five years Rev. JAY T. STOCKING has ministered to the Pilgrim Congregational church, St. Louis, Mo., to which pastorate he went from a long ministry—from 1915 to 1927—at Union Congregational church, Upper Montclair, N. J. His earlier pastorates were for the most part in New England: he was at Newtonville, Mass., for nine years. Dr. Stocking's education was received at Amherst, Yale Divinity school and at the University of Berlin. He has been prominent in the national work of his denomination and is a member of the commission on international justice and good-will of the Federal council.

Since his graduation at the Princeton theological seminary, in 1905, Rev. CLARENCE E. MACARTNEY has had but three pastorates: at First Presbyterian church, Paterson, N. J., 1905-14; Arch Street church, Philadelphia, 1914-27, and First church, Pittsburgh, where he now ministers. Dr. Macartney received his A. B. from the University of Wisconsin and his M. A. from Princeton university. His denomination elected him moderator of its general assembly in 1924-5. He is a director of Princeton seminary.

Receiving his B. D. degree at Rochester divinity school in 1928,—after graduating from Bates college, in Maine—REV. STANLEY I. STUBER, encouraged by a graduate scholarship, was awarded his Th. M. from the Colgate-Rochester divinity school in 1929. As the result of extra work in college, summer school courses and special lectures, Mr. Stuber in 1928 wrote his first book, "How We Got Our Denominations" which was published by the Association Press. Another volume, "The Living Water," followed soon. He is now pastor of a small but influential church, the Baptist church of Clifton Springs, N. Y. Beginning with the summer quarter of this year, he becomes a regular contributor to the 20th Century Quarterly.

The career of Dr. PETER AINSLIE *is a* long and honorable one, but perhaps the highest honor that has come to him is the bestowal upon him, by leaders of many denominations, of the title, "the prophet of Christian unity." He has been a Disciples pastor in Baltimore since 1891, and the Christian Temple there, under his wise guidance, has become widely known for its ministry of social service and teaching, and for its consistent practice of the spirit of Christian unity. The honors that have come to him in the field of international Christian leadership are too numerous to mention. As minister, teacher, editor, author, internationalist, he has made an unusual record.

During the world war Rev. ALBEA GODBOLD served in the medical department of the army in France, and later was engaged with the employee bureau of labor statistics in Washington. His education was received at George Washington university, Southern Methodist university (A. B. and B. D.), and Yale (M. A.) He was also for a time a student at the University of Grenoble, France. He is now minister of the University Place Methodist church at Chapel Hill, N. C.—the seat of the University of North Carolina.

The national order for Christian youth called "The Comrades of the Way" was founded some years ago by Rev. HARRY W. KIMBALL, minister of the Evangelical Congregational church, Needham, Mass., for the past 10 years. This organization now has 100 chapters. Mr. Kimball is a graduate of the Bowdoin Andover theological seminary.

Dr. FREDERICK W. NORWOOD *is minister* at City Temple, London.

Rev. ROY L. SMITH *is a Methodist* pastor. His article in this issue is to appear in a book, "Winning Ways for Working Churches," an Abingdon Press publication.

TITLES AND TEXTS

What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

GEORGE L. WILLETS, First Presbyterian, Columbus, O. "Christian Poise." Isa. 26:3—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."

WILLIAM P. MERRILL, Brick Presbyterian, New York, N. Y. "A Lodging Place of Wayfaring Men." Jer. 9:2—"O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men."

W. LLEWELLYN HAMER, Stoughton Street Baptist, Dorchester, Boston, Mass. "Into the Silence With God." Psa. 46:10—"Be still, and know that I am God."

W. H. WIESE, Methodist, Beaver Dam, Wis. "Specializing in the Impossible." Matt. 17:20—"If ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove thou hence to yonder place, it shall remove."

EDWIN A. HARTNEY, Methodist, Derby, Conn. "The Joy of Trial." James 1:2—"Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

ALFRED W. SWAN, First Congregational, Madison, Wis. "Self-Control and Brotherly Love" (a sermon on prohibition.) Rom. 14:17—"The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

EDWIN W. BISHOP, Plymouth Congregational, Lansing, Mich. "God's Imponderables." 1 Cor. 13:13—"Now abide faith, hope, love."

FOR YOUR SERMON TITLE AND TEXT

Title of sermon .....

Text used (Write out the text) .....

Name of minister .....

Name of church .....

Address .....

The Editor's Page

The Event of the Month

BEER was defeated in the house of representatives by a vote of 228 to 169. The vote probably represents the present real strength of the wets in the house. Some weeks ago the Beck-Linthicum bill for submission of the repeal of the eighteenth amendment was defeated by 225 to 188, the larger wet vote in that instance being explained by the fact that the resubmission proposal gathered in a number of the more neutral or doubtful members who were unwilling to take responsibility for wet legislation but were quite willing to pass the question to the people for a popular mandate. The drys have no reason to be comforted by the defeat of beer on so narrow a margin. No person of intelligence should longer doubt that the opposition is making a steady and ominous invasion of dry morale. Plainly we are moving toward a new test of the popular will with respect to the liquor traffic. There are two considerations which drys should clearly define in their thoughts as they approach the day of testing. One is to reject all talk in terms of a so-called referendum. Our constitution makes no provision for it. And an extra-legal referendum is psychologically unsound as a device for testing the popular will. The other is to demand that no proposal for repeal shall be submitted to the states unless there is indissolubly coupled with it a specific substitute for that which it is proposed to repeal.

Resubmission—But Only With a Substitute

The Book of the Month

HE WHOM A DREAM HATH POSSESSED. *By John Knox. Ray Long and Richard R. Smith, Inc.*, $1.25.

AS AN illustration of the possibilities of turning poetry to effective homiletic use, I wish to call attention to this little, inexpensive book by Rev. John Knox, who is the minister of Fisk university. Mr. Knox takes that exquisite poem of Shaemas O'Sheel, beginning

> "He whom a dream hath possessed knoweth
> no more of doubting,
> For mist and the blowing of winds
> and the mouthing of words he scorns,"

and uses each line of its four stanzas as the keynote of a chapter. The poem thus runs like a golden thread through the entire book, or emerges again and again like the haunting motif of a symphony, or hangs like a rainbow over those landscapes of life upon which the author sheds the light of his own fresh insight. The sixteen chapters were originally sermons, put into written form, I imagine, after their delivery. They deal with the major verities of religion—faith, peace, heroism, the soul, social injustice, the existence of God, beauty, mysticism, "the great empire of silence," law and grace, freedom, spiritual riches and resources, the kingship of Jesus, courage and adventure, immortality, God's "glory," the kingdom of God, danger, death. If Mr. Knox could be regarded as a sample of the kind of young preachers we are producing today, I would have a new faith in the future of the Christian ministry. Such a combination of beauty and strength in preaching I have not run upon for a long time.

A Thought for the Month

EVERYTHING in our human life that is good is also perilous. And the greater the good the greater is its peril. That is an observation of which the most spiritual souls are the most poignantly aware. It is not the unregenerate and vulgar sinner who is most conscious of sin. The saint is more conscious of his sin than is the sinner. He not only sees the hole of the pit from which he was digged, but he never overcomes the consciousness of the moral peril in which he now stands. It was none other than St. Paul who called himself the chief of sinners. And that was not merely because of his past sins. It reflected his state of consciousness. Being religious is at once life's supreme good and its supreme peril. The danger of being religious is that a man may become a pharisee. The pharisee is the devout man whose devoutness has become routine. He has lost his sense of sin. His goodness has been severed from love and from divine grace. The root of his piety has dried up. He goes on being devout because he wants to be correct or respectable, or because he feels on peculiarly good terms with God. This is but a form of vanity and egotism. Jesus condemned it mercilessly. Over against it the Master set the publican who made no profession of piety nor was conscious of any goodness in himself, but asked God's mercy because he was a sinner. When a religious man loses the spirit of the publican, though he be ever so correct in his outer habits, he has not only ceased to grow but his piety is already decaying at the core. No truly religious man should ever get beyond the sense of sin and the need of God's cleansing grace. The "new birth" is not an event which takes place once for all, but is a continually repeated experience vouchsafed to those who in humbleness of spirit never congratulate themselves that they have attained, but press on to the prize of the ever higher and higher calling that is in Christ Jesus.

The Peril of Being Religious

Charles Clayton Morrison

Can Religious Editors Preach?

THE JULY issue of The Christian Century Pulpit will be given over to sermons by six editors of the religious press. It will be an unusual number. One thing that may perhaps surprise readers of the Pulpit, as they open up this special issue, is the fact that these editors say but little about the economic depression, prohibition or war and peace. They pass from the so-called "timely" subjects to the timeless themes of the faith.

These editor-preachers seem to be taking this opportunity to get away from the "pressing problems" of today for a spiritual retreat. For instance, Dr. Robert A. Ashworth, of the Baptist, preaches on "A Song of God's Statutes," his text being "Thy statutes are my song as I wander through the world." Dr. James H. Snowden, of the Presbyterian Banner, chooses as his theme, "The Ministry of Silence."

It is an interesting fact that very few of the sermons now being received from over the country are talking much of the economic depression; the preachers evidently are endeavoring to minister to the *spiritual* depression of today. And that may be a very significant sign of the times.

The Religious Editors Number will bring inspiration for the inner life of every minister reader

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Appreciations of The "Pulpit"

"The Pulpit maintains a high standard. I am a devotee both of the Christian Century and the Pulpit."—THOMAS STREET, *Second Congregational Church, Winsted, Conn.*

"The Pulpit is splendid! I must express my appreciation for the help and inspiration which it has brought to me personally."—EDWARD H. JONES, *Presbyterian Church, State College, Pa.*

"I have subscribed to the Pulpit since its beginning, and find the sermons published of great interest."—C. FRANKLIN KOCH, *St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Richmond, Ind.*

"The monthly inspirer, the Christian Pulpit, is one of the things that helps keep my spirits up."—A MAURICE CHAMBERLAIN, *Community Methodist Church, Elwood, Iowa.*

"I find both the Pulpit and The Christian Century very helpful and full of inspiration."—WALTER D. HENDRY, *Church of Christ, Melbourne Road, Leicester, England.*

"The Pulpit and the 'Century' help to fill in the low places in our thinking. I check myself up by the sermons you publish."—BERTON F. BRONSON, *Community Baptist Church, King City, Cal.*

"I have been a subscriber to the Pulpit since it came into existence; it has been a continual inspiration to me, helping me to keep my own sermons at a higher level than would otherwise have been possible."—FREDERIC F. G. DONALDSON, *First Congregational Church, Princeton, Mass.*

"The Pulpit is getting better every month. It is filled with helpful material."—J. PERRY PRATHER, *Church of the Brethren, Ashland, Ohio.*

"I want to thank you for your 'thought for the month'—'The Abiding Source of Optimism.' It might have occupied a conspicuous place—even in the Pulpit."—J. N. SCHOLES, *St. Joe, Ind.*

"One of the most valuable features of the Pulpit is the pastoral prayer published in each issue. May I suggest an article on 'Pulpit Prayers' in your Preacher Problems department?"—HERMAN F. REISSIG, *King's Highway Congregational Church, Brooklyn, N. Y.*

"The Pulpit keeps me out of a rut, into which we ministers are prone to fall. That 'Unknown Soldier Speaks' by Dr. Holmes is one of the best pulpit productions I have ever read."—J. G. BELL, *Berthoud, Colo.*

"Dr. Holmes' address is easily worth the price asked for one year's subscription of the Pulpit. The President of the United States, his cabinet and both houses of Congress should be compelled to commit that article to memory!"—J. MURRAY TAYLOR, *Memphis, Tenn.*

" 'The Unknown Soldier Speaks' should be put out in pamphlet form and widely distributed. It is superb."—A. EDWARD KELSEY, *Amesbury, Mass.*

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